

FOR A GREATER NEW-YORK

HEARING ON THE TWO BILLS BEFORE THE LEGISLATURE.

Andrew H. Green Reviews the Work of the Commission—Brooklyn Advocates Want an Agreement About Taxation—Consolidation Would Raise the Rate in New-York to a Moderate Extent—No Action Taken on the Bills.

ALBANY, N. Y., Jan. 17.—The Cities Committees of the two houses gave a hearing this afternoon in the Senate Chamber on the Cantor and Reynolds Greater New-York bills. Senator Cantor introduced the commission bill providing for submitting to a vote of the citizens of the localities affected the question of consolidating all the territory about the mouth of the Hudson into one municipality, while the Reynolds bill provides for the consolidation of New-York City and Brooklyn only, with a uniform system of taxation.

There were present Andrew H. Green and Edward F. Linton of the Greater New-York Commission and the following from the Brooklyn Consolidation League: E. C. Graves, E. M. Grout, James Matthews, Ross Parker, Sanders Shanks, Dr. E. L. Coombs, and A. C. Shenstone. Senator Cantor's bill was first taken up. Senator Cantor read a letter from citizens of Ravenswood favoring consolidation.

Mr. Green gave an account of the appointment of the commission, which was appointed in 1890. The Commissioners, after extended inquiry, were unanimous in favor of the bill, all the localities in the bill being represented in the commission. There was nothing binding in the bill. The vote to be taken would be merely advisory to the Legislature which would be called upon to frame the terms of consolidation. There were many conflicting interests to be reconciled. Mr. Green opposed the Reynolds bill.

E. M. Grout, speaking for the Consolidation League of Brooklyn, disliked to antagonize Mr. Green, to whom he gave the credit of originating the Greater New-York idea. But the question of taxation, he thought, should be settled at the start, and not left to a succeeding Legislature. Consolidation under the commission's plan would so add to the tax rate of New-York City that it could never be accomplished. The Brooklyn League had given to the consolidation project all the strength that it had. The joining of New-York and Brooklyn would add only a very small sum to New-York's rate, while it would reduce the Brooklyn rate. This reduction would be only just, as New-York's taxes were largely paid by citizens of Brooklyn who did business there. If Brooklyn could be secured, the other localities would come in when they were wanted; Brooklyn secured, the rest would be easy. Brooklyn could not be secured without some assurance of advantage to herself, such as would be secured by an equal tax rate.

E. C. Graves of the Consolidation League said that the league had in one year secured 21,000 members in Brooklyn pledged to vote and work for consolidation. He understood that the towns outside of Brooklyn in Kings County would be annexed to Brooklyn by special bills this Winter, and that Long Island City would also come in in the same way.

The consolidation of New-York and Brooklyn would raise the tax rate of New-York temporarily from \$1.82 to \$1.92 per \$100. Chicago was growing very fast; there was no ignoring the fact. If New-York should lose its prestige as the greatest city of the country, it would lose its business to the extent of \$50,000,000 a year, which would be many times greater than the increased tax would be. At Chicago's special election for a Mayor to succeed Mayor Harrison, there were cast 227,350 votes. A month before, at a general election, New-York cast 238,220 votes. The persons registered in Chicago at the special election numbered 280,040, or 20,000 more than New-York ever registered. This showed that Chicago was getting very close. As a matter of fact, it was growing faster than New-York City, but not faster than the consolidation area. In 1890 Chicago had 1,090,850, a growth in ten years of 593,685; the consolidation area—New-York, Kings County, and Long Island City—had 2,633,279 population in 1890, a growth in ten years of 810,000, thus outstripping Chicago.

Brooklyn did not ask New-York to assume a dollar's worth of her bonded indebtedness. If New-York should vote against consolidation and Brooklyn for it, what would happen? The changed complexion of the Legislature from last year was due to Brooklyn, and the change in Brooklyn was due to the annexation system. What had been done once would be done again and again until an annexation party grew up in New-York City in self-defense against the effect of opposition in the control of the State.

Edward F. Linton of the committee said that the Commissioners based their advocacy of the idea on much broader grounds than competition with Chicago. Substantial and needed improvements would follow consolidation. He did not wish to comment upon the treatment which the bill had received last Winter. There had been no hope for the measure then; there was this Winter. The people of Brooklyn had defeated the Representatives who opposed the question. He knew of no opposition to the commission plan in Brooklyn sufficient to defeat it. The question should be submitted in its broadest sense, and not complicated by conditions which, if made by one community, might be made by another. The question should be decided by wholesale and not by piecemeal.

Jesse G. Johnson urged the Consolidation League's bill.

Senator Cantor remarked that the sentiment in favor of annexation came from Brooklyn, where real estate values would be increased one-third by it. New-York was not afraid that Chicago would outstrip her, either in population or wealth. It was unfair of Brooklyn to attempt to bind New-York beforehand. Both cities would derive advantages from consolidation, but Brooklyn would receive the greatest.

George J. Greenfield, the Richmond County member of the Greater New-York Commission, made a defense of Staten Island, which, he said, was the most beautiful and picturesque spot in the State, inhabited by people who in truth, education, and some of them in wealth, compared favorably with the people of Brooklyn.